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Support Senate Bill 1197: An Act Concerning Workforce Development

My name is Eric Santini and I am a multi-family builder/developer as well as a property manager and apartment owner from Ellington, CT. I am also the immediate past President and Chairman of the Home Builders and Remodelers Association of Connecticut. Our family business has built hundreds of homes and apartments over the past 50+ years in Tolland County. We currently have approximately 25 employees.

I ask that this committee approve Senate Bill 1197 because it addresses the home building industry's need to develop and attract young workers.

It is no secret that Connecticut needs more housing. Since the onset of the Great Recession, we have been averaging approximately only 5,000 housing units a year. In the years prior to 2008, we were building almost double that amount. The reasons for the lack of housing production include restrictive zoning by our municipalities, lack of infrastructure for higher density developments and **a shrinking and aging residential workforce**. Connecticut has one of the oldest residential construction workforces in the county. In order to address this shortage, we must expose our future workforce to the trades. Not every student is best suited for a traditional 4-year college. The skilled trades in residential construction offer good paying jobs with relatively little education debt. In addition, working in the trades can be a pathway to business ownership. This bill will help our public schools offer a program that will introduce residential construction to those students that may demonstrate an interest and talent for a career in the skilled trades. Attracting and developing this future workforce will be critical to tackling our state's housing crisis. If we don't have the workforce, businesses like ours can't build the homes that are essential to the future well being of our state.

Senate Bill 1197 will help us attract the talent that will fuel our future housing production. I ask that the Education Committee pass SB 1197. Thank you for your consideration of my testimony.